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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the leadership styles and practices of 214 women student leaders at a large public university. Specifically, the study examined: (1) what leadership practices the women embraced; (2) what influence academic aspirations had on leadership practices and sex role characteristics; (3) what sex roles the women embraced; (4) which sex role characteristics influence leadership practices; (5) what are the racial/ethnic differences in leadership styles and practices; and (6) what impact mentors had on leadership styles and practices. Subjects completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and a demographic data form. Results indicated that women who were leaders in high school had higher mean scores on all scales for both instruments. Women of color had slightly lower mean scores, compared to white students, on each of the LPI scales. Women who had three or more female mentors received slightly higher mean scores on each of the LPI scales than did women who had zero to two female mentors. Results supported a women's leadership ethos in which followers are empowered rather than controlled or managed, and suggest that women students should have more female role models and mentors and participate in activities to enhance their assertiveness. The special need for women of color to participate in leadership activities was noted. (Contains 30 references.) (DB)

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Women Students' Leadership Styles and Practices

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Women Students' Leadership Styles and Practices

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Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education
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Abstract

While most studies indicate that men and women are equally effective as leaders (Bass, 1990; Posner & Brodsky, 1992), findings that men and women may use different leadership styles imply that they focus on different behavioral characteristics. This study was conducted to assess the leadership styles and practices of women student leaders. Data were collected from 214 women student leaders at a large public university. They completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 1995), the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), and a demographic data form. Results indicate that women who were leaders in high school had higher mean scores on all scales for both instruments. Women of color had slightly lower mean scores on each of the LPI scales compared to White students. Women who had three or more female mentors received slightly higher mean scores on each of the LPI scales than women who had zero to two female mentors. Implications for future programming are discussed.

Women Students' Leadership Styles and Practices

It is important to recognize that leadership styles and practices for women are not the same as those experienced by men (Gurman & Long, 1992; Komives, 1994; Korabik, 1990; Rogers, 1988). The history of leadership has been primarily based upon a male model and the destiny for women as leaders hinges upon researchers studying the variation in styles and practices between the sexes.

Gilligan (1977) recognized the difficulty of generalizing men's experiences to women's throughout her study of women's moral reasoning. Drawing on literature, mythology, psychology, and interviews, she supports her hypothesis that, in contrast to the male vision of a hierarchy of power, women view the world as a web of relationships than to be "separate" and "on top." Women's development is characterized by a recurring tension between caring for others versus self, and only at the most complex level is the self a legitimate object of care. Out of this insight, Gilligan notes, that women espouse a value that is based in a "morality of nonviolence" grounded in the ethic of care.

The notion of interconnectedness and its place in women's reasoning has been reinforced in several additional studies. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) and Baxter-Magolda (1992) found that women's intellectual development is qualitatively different from men's in the transition from certainty (dualism) to uncertainty (relativism). In addition, women's preferred mode of learning includes hearing others, being open to people saying what they feel, and encouraging others to express their view (Baxter-Magolda, 1992). According to

Belenky et al., while men like to argue and debate each other in class, women do not like to express themselves for fear of separating from others. Thus, the stereotype of women as passive or unassertive may have its roots in the fact that women would rather preserve relationships than "win the debate." Winning is of secondary importance in the female world when the consequences are personal isolation. Gilligan and Belenky et al., thus affirm the fact that at the heart of the female ethos is the focus on relationships and the resulting values of duty, love, and care.

Numerous studies have delved into the sex role behaviors of women leaders and managers (Bem, 1987; Gurman & Long, 1992; Korabik, 1990) and the researchers note that many women tap into their masculine characteristics when leading groups. This is because there is an emphasis on instrumentality, assertiveness, and verbal acuity or qualities are ascribed to men in our society which translates into leadership abilities that are viewed as significant.

Sex role orientation, specifically masculinity, femininity, and androgyny, are traits which can be nurtured within individuals. Bem (1974, 1975, 1981, 1987, 1993) noted that masculine behaviors are those connected with autocentrism, instrumentalism, and agency, whereas feminine characteristics are the expressive and nurturing traits to name just a few. Concomitantly, these behaviors impact the manner in which women and men interact with others and affects their level of self-efficacy.

> Men and women tend to hold different attributions for their successes and failures. Many women tend to credit their successes to external factors like luck and being in the right place at the right time. Many men, in contrast, tend to credit successes to internal factors like being prepared and capable; they attribute their failures to external factors like fate, others not doing their part, or bad luck. (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998, p. 142).

Society has a tremendous influence in encouraging women to endorse feminine attributes and make masculinity the domain for men. Androgynous individuals, according to Bem, have a healthy balance of both masculine and feminine characteristics. The idea of androgynous leadership has been researched and it was found that an initiating style of leadership was significantly correlated with masculinity and consideration was significantly related to femininity (Korabik, 1990). Furthermore, both behaviors, initiation and consideration, were significantly related to androgyny. Data analysis from Korabik's study also found that sex-role characteristics were better predictors of leadership practices and styles than biological sex.

Androgynous persons, according to Bem (1974, 1975, 1987, 1993), can call upon a wider range of traits, characteristics, and behaviors because they are more flexible and less sex typed, or forced to ascribe to strict gender roles for men and women. Numerous researchers (Gurman & Long, 1992; Korabik, 1990; Korabik & Ayman as cited in Korabik, 1990; Motowidlo, 1982; Mudrow & Bayton, 1979) have found mixed outcomes relating leadership effectiveness with androgyny. Specifically, in Mudrow and Bayton's study (1979) the researchers found no relationship between effectiveness and sex-role orientation. They did not find any differences in the accuracy in which masculine, feminine, and androgynous individuals made personnel decisions. A significant relationship between masculinity and leadership behavior was found in Butterfield and Powell's study (as cited in Korabik, 1990). They also discovered that there was no relationship between androgyny and leadership performance. Conversely, Motowidlo (1982) found that managers who exhibited androgynous sex role characteristics had different leadership styles than those who were sex-typed. Based upon their supervisors ratings, the androgynous managers were more active listeners, supported individuals who were in non-traditional vocations, and are more likely than se-typed managers to exhibit approval and support of non-traditional occupational transition. Another study found evidence that androgyny was negatively related with job stress and positively associated with self-reported leadership effectiveness (Korabik & Ayman, 1987). Based upon the research, it is difficult to assess whether or not sex-role characteristics play a significant role in leadership effectiveness and style.

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between sex role behaviors and leadership practices. The following research questions were addressed in this study (a) what leadership practices do women embrace? (b) do academic aspirations influence leadership practices and sex role characteristics? (c) what sex roles do women leaders

embrace? (d) which sex role characteristics influence leadership practices? (e) what are the racial/ethnic differences in leadership styles and practices? (f) what impact do mentors have on leadership styles and practices?

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected from 214 undergraduate women who participated in the one day Women's Leadership Conference at a large public university in the southeastern sector of the United States. There were 31 (14.5%) first year students, 48 (22.4%) sophomores, 63 (29.4) juniors, and 72 (33.6%) seniors. The racial/ethnic composition of the group was comprised of 149 (69.3%) Caucasians/Euro Americans, 29 (12.5%) Hispanics/ Latinas, 20 (9.5%) Asian/Pacific Islanders, 4 (1.1%) African Americans, 4 (.20%) Biracial, 2 American Indians (.10%), 1 (0.5%) Middle Easterner, and 1 (0.5%) American. Four respondents did not indicate a racial/ethnic classification. The average age of the women was 19.83 with range from 18-22 years old. The mean grade point average for the participants was 3.31 with a range from 1.55-4.00. Two instruments, The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), were administered as well as a demographic data form to collect information that was not requested on the aforementioned protocols.

Instruments

Leadership Practices Inventory. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) - Student Version measures five key leadership practices and commitments (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 18): (1) Challenging the Process - Search our challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve. Experiment, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes. (2) Inspiring a Shared Vision - Envision an uplifting and ennobling future. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams (3) Enabling Others to Act - Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. Strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support. (4) Modeling the Way - Set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values. Achieve small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment. (5) Encouraging the Heart - Recognize individual contributions to the success of every project. Celebrate team accomplishments regularly.

The instrument contains thirty statements --- six statements for measuring each of the leadership practices. The respondents rates themselves on a scale from 1 (rarely or never) to 5 (very frequently or always) in terms of how frequently they engage in the practice described. The numbers for the six statements on each of the leadership practices is summed for the individual scale (practice) score which could range from 6 to 30. The LPI has a self (leader) and observer (followers) inventory, however only the self form was used in this study.

The LPI-Self provides a percentile ranking for leaders which is determined by the norm group performing at or below a given number (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 11). The range of scores for the five practices are as follows: (1) Challenging the Process: Low 14 - 20; Moderate 21-23; High 24 - 30 (2) Inspiring a Shared Vision: Low 10 - 18; Moderate 19 - 22; High 23 - 30 (3) Enabling Others to Act: Low 15 - 22; Moderate 23 - 25; High 26 - 30 (4) Modeling the Way: Low 14 - 20; Moderate 21 - 23; High 24 - 30 and (5) Encouraging the Heart: Low 12 - 19; Moderate 21 - 23; High 24 - 30.

Internal reliabilities (Chronbach alphas) on the LPI - Self ranged from .69 to .85 (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, 1997). Test-retest reliability for the five practices has been at the .93 level and above in most of their studies, other researchers have reported test-retest reliabilities in the .80 level and above. Komives (1994) calculated Chronbach alpha scale scores for the LPI-Self Student Version to determine reliabilities for her study on women student leaders. The results were .64 for Challenging the Process, .66 for Inspiring Vision, .73 for Enabling Others, .51 for Modeling the Way, and .69 for Encouraging the Heart.

Bem Sex Role Inventory. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974, 1975, 1981, 1987, 1993) assesses psychological femininity and masculinity as well as distinguishing androgynous and undifferentiated individuals. The BSRI - Short Form (Bem, 1981) consists of thirty items, ten feminine personality traits (e.g. gentle, compassionate, warm, sensitive to the needs of others) ten masculine traits (e.g. defend my own beliefs, independent, forceful, strong personality, aggressive) and ten neutral or filler traits (e.g., adaptable, likable, conscientious, moody). The respondents rate themselves on a scale from 1 (never to almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true) how well each trait describes themselves. A respondent's

femininity score above the sample median (5.19) and a masculinity score lower than the sample median (4.97) is classified as having a feminine sex role identity. Respondent's with a masculinity score higher than sample median and the femininity score is below the median is classified as having a masculine sex role identity. If both scores are above the sample median an androgynous sex role identity is recorded for the respondent, and if both scores are below the median, the respondent is classified as undifferentiated.

Bem (1981) reported the internal consistency coefficients of both the short and long from of the inventory. After computing the scores separately for males and females on the femininity, masculinity, and difference scores, the coefficients of reliability ranged from 0.75 for females on the femininity scale of the original form to 0.90 for males on the difference score of the short form. The data are consistent and conclusive that the items which comprise the scales of the BSRI are consistent and measure one trait (Beiger, 1985).

Validation studies suggest that gender-related behaviors correlate with the BSRI's femininity and/or masculinity scales (Lippa, 1985). In the 1981 test manual, Bem reports the following coefficient alphas: for males, 0.87 for femininity and 0.97 for masculinity; for females, 0.75 for the femininity scale and 0.87 for the masculinity scale. The correlation between long and short form scales is .90.

The women in this study also completed a demographic questionnaire developed by the researchers. They provided racial/ethnic information, university classification, academic major, city and state of permanent residence, grade point average, high school leadership activities, number of male and female mentors in their life, and personal life/career goals.

Procedure

The participants in this study were undergraduate college students who volunteered to attend a one day workshop on skills to enhance leadership performance for women. During check-in for the conference, the participants received a registration packet with conference material as well as the research instruments, a letter from the describing the study, and notification of informed consent from the university institutional research board. The letter also instructed the participants to complete The Leadership Practices Inventory, Bem Sex Role Inventory, and Demographic Data Form before they attended the workshop sessions and drop the protocols off in a box near the registration table. The researchers were available during the entire conference to discuss any questions or concerns the participants may have expressed.

RESULTS

Analysis were conducted to test the scale reliabilities of the Leadership Practices and the Bem Sex Role Inventories in this study. Chronbach alphas for the LPI are as follows: .73 for Challenging the Process; .77 for Inspiring a Shared Vision; .68 for Enabling Others to Act; .70 for Modeling the Way; and .76 for Encouraging the Heart. Chronbach alphas were tabulated for the Bem Sex Role Inventory to determine reliabilities based on the responses from the 214 women participants. Alpha's for the masculinity scale was .83 and .89 for the femininity scale.

The results of the correlation analysis on the subscales for the LPI and BSRI appear in Table 1. The relationship between the subscales shows that they there are positive but not statistically significant. The correlation of interest is between the BSRI Femininity score and the LPI Enabling Others to Act (r=.52). What this represents is the connection between the feminine behaviors of support and allocentrism with the leadership practices of collaboration and empowering others.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

The mean scores for the Leadership Practices and Bem Sex Role Inventories are presented in Table 2. Overall the participants in this study have mean scores on the LPI that ranged from a low of 21.33 for Challenging the Process to 25.44 for Encouraging the Heart. The women also scored highest on the Femininity scale of the Bem Sex Role Inventory.

[Insert Table 2 About Here]

Two *t* tests were performed comparing the respondents plans to attend graduate school with those who stated that they would not continue their education beyond the bachelor's degree to determine if the two sets of women rated themselves differently on the Leadership Practices and the Bem Sex Role Inventories.

Respondents who indicated that they had planned to attend graduate school (n=162), compared to those who did not (n = 38), had higher means on all Leadership Practices Inventory survey scales. Differences between these two groups were statistically significant for

the following scales: Challenging the Process ($p < .05$), and Femininity ($p < .05$).

We performed *t* tests to assess whether those who were leaders in high school embraced different leadership practices than those were not leaders. Additionally, was there a difference between the two groups with sex role characteristics on the Bem Inventory.

Respondents who indicated that they had been leaders in high school (n=149), compared to those who indicated they had not (n=59), had higher means on all scales. Differences between these groups were statistically significant for the following scales: Challenging the Process ($p < .01$), Modeling the Way ($p < .01$), Enabling Others to Act ($p < .01$). The Bem Sex Role Inventory scores indicated that those who were leaders in high school endorsed masculine ($p < .01$) sex role characteristics.

Additional calculations were conducted comparing the leadership scores for women of color to White respondents. Students of color (n = 58), overall, had slightly lower mean scores on each of the LPI scales compared to White students (n = 140). The difference between these two groups was statistically significant ($p < .05$) on the LPI scale of Encouraging the Heart. Women of color received a mean score of 24.60 compared to 25.75 for White women.

Women who had three or more female mentors received slightly higher mean scores on each of the LPI scales than the women who had zero female mentors and the women who had one or two female mentors. These differences were significant ($p < .05$) for the scale Challenging the Process. LPI scale means did not differ significantly for women who reported having zero male mentors versus one or two male mentors versus three or more male mentors.

DISCUSSION

These findings support a women's leadership ethos in which they create and promote an atmosphere where followers are empowered rather than controlled or managed. When Romano (1996) asked the women leaders in her qualitative study to describe their leadership style, they used descriptors such as "nonhierarchical, interactive, accessible, one-to-one, equality, and team member" (p. 679). Similarly, a significant number of respondents in this study embraced Bem's (1974) feminine sex role traits and behaviors, which, in turn, can be directly related to their preferred leadership styles of encouraging the heart and enabling others to act. Even though their LPI scores were not low but fell in the moderate to high categories for all of the leadership traits, they were perilously close to the low end on Challenging the Process which the characteristics are connected with more masculine role behaviors. This may mean that the women are in need to support from male and female mentors to help them hone some of the "masculine" behaviors they may not feel comfortable endorsing (Curcio, Morsink, & Bridges, 1989) and to broaden their range of leadership skills. Enough cannot be said about the need for mentoring and appropriate modeling. Romano (1996) emphasized the impact families and strong women have on the development of their personal characteristics and motivation for leadership. The women in her study were quite adamant about role modeling and how their mothers and grandmothers helped them hone their leadership abilities. Her study supported the importance to women student leaders of growing up with visible models of powerful women.

Based upon the results of the study it is recommended that women students are encouraged to have more female role models and mentors, participate in workshops and programs that will enhance their assertiveness, and provide leadership activities for women of color. Because there are so few women leaders there is very little opportunity for female students to observe and interact with them or to have women as mentors (Sagaria, 1988). "The situation is even worse for women of color who seek role models from their own racial or cultural backgrounds" (Sagaria, 1988, p. 7). Romano (1996) proffered that women of color and disabled students have similar issues as majority students but are also impacted by concerns about being different. Women of color may be influenced by racial stereotypes of leaders in addition to the gender issues. Thus, they may need workshops that will address concerns related to racism and the paucity of role models who are sensitive to their issues. Hughes (1988) hypothesized that "minority women's exclusion from White patriarchy shields them from indoctrination into the beliefs and values of those systems and positions them to offer keen insight into differences between men's and women's realities" (p.64). Based upon the aforementioned quote and the LPI data, women of color may have a style vastly different from the traditional models based upon cultural experiences and attempting to maneuver through the complexities of leadership without a mentor who mirrors their experiences. Women of color gain from any programmatic efforts to enhance their leadership potential (Hughes, 1988). They could benefit from personal contact through individualized mentoring and programs that respects their

race, gender, and cultural differences.

Additional programming efforts that could provide leadership opportunities for women are: (1) to start an emerging leaders program to empower all interested students, regardless of leadership experience, (2) to become involved in community activities, particularly high schools, to practice the leadership skills they have acquired and help girls who need role models, (3) develop a credited leadership course taught by women and women of color, (4) develop a minority leadership conference or retreat to focus on minority leadership issues, and (5) encourage existing organizations to provide members with ongoing development activities that emphasize diversity issues. Sagaria (1988) indicated that the programs or organizations that seem to be the most instrumental in developing women's leadership are those intended primarily or exclusively for women. The women who participated in this study were leaders in organizations that served primarily women such as sororities or residence hall councils that were predominantly comprised of women residents. These organizations must be recognized as providing women with the leadership opportunities they desperately need on our college campuses. Thus, programming should be provided for these potential leaders very early in their academic career.

The women in this study endorse feminine sex role characteristics and are comfortable with a variety of leadership practices. Men and women are quite capable of making sound decisions, leading pragmatically, being good followers when needed, and communicating effectively, "But they may go about doing those things differently than the other sex would" (Komives, et al, 1998, p. 142). The researchers elucidate further stating that "men have traditionally held many visible leadership positions, the conventional paradigm of leadership was often reflected as having these same male characteristics (Komives et al, 1998, p. 142). The women in this study, however, did not support the male model of leadership and this did not negatively impact their leadership style or practices.

Limitations, Implications, and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be noted when interpreting the findings. First, the sample consisted of primarily traditional aged students at one institution. The women in this study were aspiring leaders or held prominent positions within their organizations. Based upon these limitations it is, therefore, difficult to generalize the results to all women attending a college or university.

Second, the participants in this study held leadership positions in groups that were comprised primarily of women (e.g. sororities, women's history month committee etc.) and not organizations that had a higher number of male members. This may explain why the majority of women embraced the feminine characteristics on the Bem Inventory. Furthermore, leadership preferences such and encouraging the heart and enabling others to act were highly prized over challenging the process and strengthening others. The former traits could be categorized as feminine and the latter as masculine.

Third, there were very few women of color participating in this study although data were used to compare and contrast scale results with White participants. It is important to conduct research on women student leaders of color because there are so few and the results may provide methods to empower and enlist more minority students to become leaders. Another important issue to note is that women and people of color struggle and work under incredible duress to receive the validation and recognition like their male counterparts (Morrison, 1996). "This added stress can lead to burnout, dissatisfaction, or disappointment" (Komives,et al, 1998, p. 301). It is important for student affairs administrators to seek out and ask women of color for their feedback on committees and other critical organizational issues, but they must also be cognizant of the enormous pressure these women face in peer relationships, extracurricular activities, and academics (Romano, 1996). By understanding their struggles and hardships student affairs administrators can provide the training for them to become active in the learning and leadership communities.

Future studies should assess the leadership attributes of women at historically Black institutions and all women colleges, women who are leaders of non-traditional organizations such as student government and other male dominated groups, and women who are over traditional age compared to the traditional population.

The results of this study did support Komives' (1994) findings in which she found women student leaders were very comfortable with "the empowering leadership practices of 'enabling others to act' and least skilled in 'challenging the process'"

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(p. 102). Similar results were found in this study with women also exhibiting high scores in encouraging the heart. Komives, et al. (1998, p. 142) proffered that "expectations that limit people's range of roles and suppress their individuality will likely inhibit their effectiveness in their communities".

Although, women students constitute over half of the nations college and university enrollments (Touchton & Davis, 1991) this cohort is engaged in fewer campus leadership positions than male students (Shavlik, Touchton, & Pearson, 1989). "Creating environments and experiences that encourage and support women students' leadership development in coeducational institutions, however, is a complicated and difficult task" (Whitt, 1994, p. 206). The information gleaned from this research project indicates that there is a need to provide more models of leadership that include an ethos of care, support, and cooperation in addition to the traditional masculine characteristics. This, in turn, will provide women with the well-rounded skills and attributes needed to challenge the process as well as encourage the heart without experiencing a sense of leadership dissonance and discomfort.

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Table 1
Intercorrelations Between Subscales of the LPI and BSRI

	1 CP	2 ISV	3 EOA	4 MW	5 EH	M Mas	F Fem
1 ChalProc	---						
2 InsShVis	.56	---					
3 EnOthAct	.42	.55	---				
4 ModelWay	.54	.60	.53	---			
5 EncHeart	.46	.57	.56	.57	---		
M Masculin	.39	.31	NS	.33	.31	---	

F Feminini	.20	.37	.52	.33	.38	NS	---

Table 2
Mean Scores for the LPI and BSRI

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
ChalPro	201	21.33	3.77	11-30
InspVis	200	21.55	4.18	11-30
EnabAct	202	24.21	2.92	14-30
ModeWay	197	23.29	3.21	13-30
EnHeart	199	25.44	3.25	12-30
Mascul	208	5.10	0.79	2.90-7.00
Femini	207	5.69	0.81	2.50-7.00